

Notes to help future Translators

October 2004

for Spanish language versions of existing NPS interpretive media

based on experiences from park folder revisions into Spanish for Whitman Mission, Saguaro, and wayside texts for Everglades, Palo Alto National Battlefield, Salinas Pueblo Missions, San Antonio Missions, Grand Canyon, and Carlsbad Caverns.

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SECTION 1:

Guiding Principles

How Literal A Translation for NPS Interpretive Media?

Avoid word-for-word translation. Clarity of meaning and elegance of phrasing are far more important than matching the exact word order of the original English.

The best Spanish titles and texts to communicate important interpretive themes may turn out to **not** be exact translations of the original English.

Word order and sentence structure seen in interesting-to-read Spanish does not always follow the normal English sentence structure. Sentence length in Spanish can be longer than the sentence lengths usually seen in NPS interpretive media in English. In fact, consider combining any short sentences to avoid a Spanish text that reads in a choppy, unnatural way.

We want to avoid the appearance that any NPS publication or wayside was written in English and translated in a rigid, mechanical way.

Park visitors who only read Spanish should be just as effectively engaged, and interpretively provoked as English-only readers. Spanish-only readers should not be either bored by a baby-talk version of Spanish, nor bogged down by unnatural verbal constructions created when we force a Spanish text to mirror the English exact word order.

Regional dialects or International Spanish?

Aim for an internationally acceptable Spanish, similar to what we hear today on news broadcasts on the major international television cable channels, such as *Univisión* or *Telemundo* or *CNN Español*.

Visual Parity

Placing Spanish text blocks below English on bilingual waysides gives Spanish readers the impression that English is more important. Left and right placement of text blocks generates less complaints from park visitors. For publications, the cleanest solution to design parity is a Spanish-only document and an English-only document.

SECTION 2:

Capitalization & punctuation

Park staff and their translation partners can save Harpers Ferry Center a great deal of pre-press prep and editing time by double-checking to make sure that their submitted texts in Spanish conform to the accepted Spanish rules, *not the English norms taught in the United States*. There are significant differences.

In areas where many people know and use both languages on a daily basis, expect confusion, particularly relative to capitalization rules in either language.

Here are examples of problems that commonly crop up:

2.01

Days of week,	per English rule per Spanish rule	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday <i>lunes, martes, miércoles</i>
Months	per English rule per Spanish rule	January, December, April, August <i>enero, diciembre, abril, agosto</i>

2.02

River/mountain names	per English rule per Spanish rule on maps along stream line alternate on maps	Mississippi River <i>río Misisipí</i> (lowercase river~río) <i>Misisipí</i> <i>R. Misisipí</i>
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2.03

Tribal and national names	per English rule per Spanish rule	Indian, Apache, English, German <i>indio, apache, inglés, alemán</i>
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2.04

Titles of books, waysides	per English rule	Most words in a title capitalized Plaza — The Heart of the Pueblo <u>For Whom the Bell Tolls</u>
	per Spanish rule	Only the FIRST word capitalized <i>Plaza — el centro del pueblo</i> <u>¿Por quién doblan las campanas?</u>

NPS publications, exhibits, and waysides follow the international rules of capitalization for Spanish seen in the Chicago Manual of Style. Sections 9.4 though 9.6 give guidance on capitalization.

SECTION 3:

Grammar Issues to Decide

3.01

Command verb forms

in English do not necessarily carry a clear sense of the degree of formality, nor the number of persons being addressed.

Default for a more international Spanish should be the formal command verb forms, singular rather than plural, because we are assuming an individual is reading the publication or the wayside.

Some NPS interpretive products ask for certain behavior compliance from visitors in very oblique, nice, light-handed terms. A clear, **more direct imperative** verb form works best in a Spanish version, as the subtler approach may often be ignored.

3.02

Formal or informal YOU

The word YOU in English becomes problematic in Spanish because YOU in English can be both singular or plural and carries no clue of the relationship of the writer/speaker to the reader or listener. In Spanish NPS documents or wayside text, the park and HFC will have to agree according to the purpose of the translated text and local usage whether the formal second person singular —*usted*-- or the informal second person singular—*tu*— is best to achieve the goals.

SECTION 4:

Punctuation Problems

Like reoccurring problems with capitalization cited above, parks and translators working with park staffs should make sure punctuation follows the accepted Spanish rules. Style guides are available from major Spanish language newspapers. Also check with the Chicago Manual of Style, Sections 9.68 through 9.79.

In areas of the United States where many people know and see both languages on a daily basis, expect confusion on what constitutes proper use.

Problems that show up in HFC projects over and over are:

4.01

Comma use in sequences

per English rule

first, second, and third

per Spanish rule

primero, segundo y tercero

Note: NO comma placed immediately before AND ~ y

4.02

Initial question mark ¿

Initial exclamation mark ¡

Spanish interrogatory and exclamatory sentences must lead with an upside down question mark and an upside down exclamation mark before the first word of the sentence. These two symbols exist in all ASCII character sets, so there is no technical or software excuse for leaving them out. This is yet another area where English usage is impacting what people think is acceptable in Spanish.

4.03

Accented vowels

Some translated materials coming into Harpers Ferry Center from parks lacks some or all of the accented vowels or other special characters. Sometimes people don't know how to get their software to replicate the special characters, and sometimes they have argued that this is no longer necessary. Advertising materials often omit accents, particularly when they are using all caps to attract attention.

A word in Spanish without its proper accents is a misspelled word. Accents are not optional in an NPS interpretive product.

SECTION 5:

Standard Usage

5.01

Business names

generally should be left in their original English or internationally known form. You can check in Spanish textbooks, and sometimes on the Internet, to determine if there is a Spanish variant of an English company name that is more prevalent in the Spanish-speaking world.

Recommended	Hudson's Bay Company
Not recommended	<i>Compañía de la Bahía de Hudson</i>

5.02

Centuries

Recommended	Siglo XX, en el siglo XVIII
Not recommended	<i>Siglo 20, en el siglo 18</i>

5.03

Decades

Recommended	en los años 1840 (note <u>no</u> S) En los años 1960 Durante la década de los 1840
Not recommended	<i>en los años 1840s</i> <i>En los años 1960s</i> <i>Durante la década de los 1840s</i>

5.04

Indians (generic) vs. specific tribal name

In English NPS interpretive texts, we use the name of the group of people we are talking about in preference over the general term Indian or even the general term Native American. We should follow the same principle in Spanish.

Recommended	<i>los apache, los cayuse, los seminola</i>
Not recommended	<i>los indios</i>

Remember these names remain lowercase in Spanish.

5.05

Native American names

are often problematic, if all we have to start out is the version of their name translated into English. We can show honor to an individual by using their real name where this is possible.

Translating the English equivalent name doesn't necessarily add any significance or meaning for a Spanish-only reader. Better to convey the actual sound of the name that the historic person would themselves recognize.

Historic name	Rabbit-Skin-Leggings
Phonetic English	Heh-yooks Toe-nihn
<i>(19th century rendering of Nez Perce pronunciation)</i>	
2 nd variant spelling found	Hee-oh'ks-te-kin
Present-day Nez Perce	heeyuxc tohon
Spelled in Spanish manner	<i>Ji-lluks-tojón</i>
Not recommended	Polainas de Pellejo de Conejo

In many cases in the Southwest, we have both a Native American name for a historic individual, and a Spanish name. The best known would be Geronimo, whose Apache name was Go-yath-lay. Since Goyathlay is famous in both English and Spanish as Gerónimo, I would advocate rendering his name in Spanish texts Gerónimo for the best chance to link the interpretive story to readers' memories.

5.06

Caveat differing geographic names

Place names are not always the same in both languages.

Rio Grande River	in English
<i>río Bravo del Norte</i>	in Spanish

Havana	in English
<i>la Habana</i>	in Spanish

check resources like *Cassell's Spanish Dictionary*, 1968. pp 1474 if in doubt.

5.07

Proper Nouns

Don't Translate

are NEVER to be translated from their original language. Keep English names all English and Spanish names all Spanish.

Recommended	William Henry Gray
Not recommended	Guillermo Enrique Gray

Recommended	Juan Ponce de León
Not recommended	John Ponce of the Lion

5.08

States vs. Nations

Map labels should compare nations to nations, and states to states Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico are states; México and Canadá are nations.

Either label only UNITED STATES and MÉXICO,

OR label	TEXAS, COAHUILA, CHIHUAHUA, NEW MEXICO, SONORA, ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, BAJA CALIFORNIA
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5.09

Time and Date

Formats

Spain and many Latin American countries use the 24-hour format for stating time, rather than the 12-hour AM/PM format mostly still in use in National Park Service products.

Recommended	16:00	19.00 hs
Not recommended	4:00 PM	7.00 PM

Dates in text in Spanish follow the DD de MM de YYYY format, so when this is truncated for saving line space, it makes sense to give dates DD.MM.YYYY. Translating dates in full is a terrible line length/space waster.

Recommended	04-VII-1776
	4.7.1776
	4 de julio de 1776

Parks and HFC will have to agree which hour:minutes separator works best for the park's anticipated audiences, and which day-month-year separator works best.

SECTION 6:

Vocabulary Choice Problem Areas

6.01

Adjective

Variety Needed:

Translations where an English noun functions as an adjective, or makes a compound noun end up longer and more repetitive in Spanish by the standard convention of translating English “YYY-XXX” into Spanish “XXXX OF THE YYYY”. Example “desert trees” becomes “*arboles del desierto*.” This contributes to the line length problem – 12 letter spaces English became 20 letter spaces in Spanish (160%). “Desert plains” becomes “*planicies del desierto*,” again, line length creeping up from 13 spaces to 21. Often adjectival forms exist, such as *desértico/a* for desert. Writer / editors should question how many times the words “desert” or “environment” need to appear in a text block to do the job, or there is no hope of getting a good text fit in the available space.

6.02

Adjectives of locality

Gentilicios

Provide readers with some variety from repeating the formula XXXX DE LA YYYY. Instead of having 20 repetitions of “Sonoran desert” rendered as *desierto de Sonora* repetitively, an alternative is to use *desierto sonorense*.

Note the adjective of locality is always **lowercase** in Spanish. Another example – Puerto Rican rainforest ~ *bosque pluvial boricua*.

6.03

América and

Americans

Citizens of the United States universally use the term America as a synonym for our country, and Americans as the term for the citizens of the 50 states and US flag territories.

WARNING: Spanish speakers find this practice arrogant and offensive, since the term *América* in Spanish includes all the nations on the two continents between the Arctic Circle and Cape Horn. *América* in Spanish includes North America, Central America, and South America, not just the USA.

In a similar way, Mexicans, Central Americans, and South Americans all consider themselves to be legitimate Americans, since they live in the Americas.

This makes a slogan like **EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA** highly problematic to translate into Spanish, as it begs the question of which America you want people to experience and to whom that America belongs. Consider that half of the Republic of Mexico was conquered and absorbed into the USA after the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-48. Bringing up the subject of whose America it is has the potential to open old wounds for many Latin Americans.

Literal-minded translators will render AMERICA and AMERICANS just as the original English writer placed them, assuming the audience will sort it out and get over their feelings of being linguistically run over roughshod.

A more accurate way to refer to the peoples of the United States in Spanish is *estadounidenses*. No English cognate for this word exists.

6.04

English Place Names Derived from Spanish

Many NPS units bear Spanish names, and to a non-Spanish speaker, these words are often perceived as memorable in and of themselves. In the case of Saguaro National Park, there are two districts, now named ‘Saguaro East’ and ‘Saguaro West’ which sounds to many like it has a certain special flavor in today’s English. What may sound appealing and exotic in English may be as mundane as “oak tree” or “cow” in Spanish.

Since Oak Tree East and Oak Tree West don’t elicit strong reader interest, and may seem strange to figure out why someone would name a national park district thus, I advocated that we not use Saguaro del Este and Saguaro del Oeste as cognates for Saguaro East and West. Better to get into the heart of the story than confuse readers at the onset with tricky titles.

But if a key feature...

If a key feature in a national park story bears an exotic Spanish name, we often expend text line length to explain or define it in English. This is a fertile place to save some

line length in the Spanish language version, as it is unnecessary to amplify what most of these Southwestern terms mean to native speakers.

6.05

Handicapped /

Disabled

Recommended term =	<i>los discapacitados</i>
Not recommended	<i>los descapacitados</i> <i>los disminuidos</i>

Alternate term gaining popularity in México =
los minusválidos

6.06

High level

Vocabulary terms

What sounds stuffy or too scientific in English can be pretty normal vocabulary in a Latin-based language like Spanish. East and west as adjectives are often rendered *del este* and *del oeste* in Spanish. Another option to say east:west in Spanish is *oriental* and *occidental*. These terms would read as too stuffy, *Scientific American*-level in today's English, but they are not so formidable in Spanish.

6.07

Indio vs. indígena

Some reviewers for early NPS Spanish media projects revealed that the simple word *indio* can have pejorative or negative connotations for some readers from some Spanish-speaking countries. Consider how emotionally loaded the words Negro, black, and African American have been in the United States in the last 40 years. Fortunately, there is a better alternative for *indio* readily available in Spanish.

Recommended	<i>los indígenas</i>
Not recommended	<i>los indios</i>

6.08

Miles vs. Kilómetros.

Gallons vs. Litros

Map legends and trail data for trailhead waysides stay cleaner and more understandable if customary US units and metric units are not translated. The simplest solution is to give feet/miles/inches/gallons in English, and put the meters/kilometers/centimeters/liters in Spanish – ONLY. Using metric measurements not only communicates to an international audience, but has the added virtue of saving serious line length by the abbreviations of the units. ‘40 km’ is even shorter than ‘25 miles’ Putting both miles and kilometers in both languages creates terrible clutter.

Not recommended =

25 miles	40 kilometers	1 hour drive
25 millas	40 kilómetros	viaje de 1 hora

Recommended=

25 miles	40 kilómetros
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Many borderlands NPS units have made the case that most of their Spanish-speaking visitors live in the U.S., and are more familiar with feet/miles/gallons. Hence there is little or no need to include metric equivalents in running text.

I am not convinced that a good socio-linguistic study would prove that hypothesis true; and even if it is so, addressing a more international audience with the courtesy of the world-wide units they know best lifts the perspective of a national park unit out of the local-interest-only sphere, and onto a higher plain of dignity and justification for special rules of treatment for the resource.

6.09

Can You Live Without

Multiple Modifiers?

Interpretive text in English abounds in noun series like “desert plains, foothills, and mountains” which can produce very long and involved expressions in Spanish. Does ‘desert’ in the case above modify just ‘plains’ or does it modify all three nouns? English construction makes it possible to compress expressions that require a lot more reading in Spanish. When trimming text to fit a space, the writer/editor should look for expressions and series that are mostly included for rhythm in English, or customary rhetoric, like ‘mountains, deserts, and plains’ or ‘bread and butter,’ and not necessarily the heart of the matter. In the Saguaro folder, the addition of ‘sweet’ to ‘nectar’ cost an

additional line in the translated Spanish text block. Since nectar is by nature sweet, I am of the opinion it can be done without and not mar the meaning.

6.10

El parque vs. Parque nacional

NPS publications often assume a reader understands the shorthand term ‘THE PARK’ refers to an element of the system of National Parks, but translating this term directly into Spanish will NOT guarantee that readers will understand what you are trying to convey. *Parque* ≠ PARK

For many visitors from Spanish-speaking backgrounds the term *parque* strictly means a small downtown urban green space, not a large natural or historico-cultural patrimony of national or international significance. “THE PARK” is NPS-insider culture shorthand that we should be careful not to depend too much on it having so much weight when translated for Spanish-speaking park visitors.

Use *parque nacional* for clarity, and more dignity

6.11

Place Names – Don’t Translate

In many new Spanish NPS publications, there is not funding available to completing restructure a map with all Spanish labels. If text next to a map refers to specific places, like a named visitor center, keep the complete name of the feature in the running Spanish text in English, so that a reader can look from the text to the map and see exactly where the reference is.

Example: Red Hills Visitor Center at Saguaro NP
NOT: *Centro de visitantes de Colinas Coloradas.*

Place names, like compound proper names in Spanish, should not be divided at the end of a line of text, if it can be avoided.

6.12

Plant & Animal Common Names in Spanish

are some of the greatest challenges for translators. The names of plants and animals vary greatly from country to country in Latin America and Spain.

Park staffs can shorten the time needed to get the right word in Spanish by supplying a translator with the **correct scientific name** before they tackle the translation. Also tell your translator who your most expected Spanish-speaking audience is: Cuban-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, internationals.

Where no common name exists in Spanish, **the scientific name is the best alternative**. In many national parks in the Spanish-speaking world, interpretive texts use the genus and species binomial in the place of local names, and readers expect to see it. In contrast to the reaction we expect from a general readership found in US national parks, scientific names are not considered too high-brow ‘south of the border.’

To date, no USPNPS area has elected to go this route.

6.13

United States

Most Spanish-language translators will know that there is more than one country in the world with a formal name that includes “United States.” For example, the correct and formal name for the republic that lies to the south of Texas is ESTADOS UNIDOS DE MÉXICO.

For courtesy, write out the entire name of our country.

Recommended *Estados Unidos de América*

Not recommended *Estados Unidos*

6.14

Lean on Verbs in Spanish vs. Nouns.

English relies heavily on nouns for key meanings, where Spanish often loads extra meaning and functions on verbs.

Literal translations that retain the English emphasis on the noun, especially if originally expressed in passive or transitive voice in English, can often be better rendered in Spanish by looking for a better alternate verb.

6.15

Whites / white children
white women

As we do in NPS interpretive texts in English, we should look for other ways to express this idea rather than *blancos*, which like the term *indios* [see above] carries connotations in Spanish from the colonial past and its *criollo* and *gauchupín* elites. Some readers in Spanish might find this choice of wording a reading road block.

The present-day sense of who qualifies to be considered ‘white’ in the United States is a volatile concept. Mexican Americans, in particular, who have been discriminated against as non-whites in the recent past don’t particularly want to have that element of racism rubbed back in their faces.

In many of these problematic cases, the term *anglosajones* will clearly indicate who we are talking about in Spanish without getting into matters of skin color. Even better, we can elect to call this group at Whitman Mission ‘settlers’ instead of ‘whites.’

6.16

Wildllife,
Plants and Animals

Although it is acceptable and common to write “plants and animals” in English with no articles, this is usually rendered in Spanish *las plantas y las animales*, producing a line length gain of 18 to 25 spaces. Writers/editors should consider employing *flora y fauna* instead to save the space.

The terms *flora y fauna* are not perceived to be as high level vocabulary in Spanish, even though using their cognates “flora and fauna” seems high fallutin in today’s English. *Flora y fauna* can be seen in interpretive media products produced in many Latin American national parks.

Alternatively, consider using *vida silvestre* ~ wildlife, if you mean the whole biological community.

SECTION 7:

Word Division Caveats

NPS publications, exhibits, and waysides generally follow the international rules of word division, for Spanish seen in the Chicago Manual of Style Sections 9.68 through 9.79.

7.01

Spanish double letters

When you divide a Spanish word into syllables for a line break, don't rely on your computer to do it right. The letters ch, ll, and rr in Spanish are considered one letter.

Examples: ci-ga-rro mo-chi-la ca-ba-lle-ro

7.02

Safeguard Key Words during text adjustments

Complex words, unusual words, and words that are the critical to the meaning of the sentence should not be divided at the end of the line of text, if at all possible.

7.03

Proper Names – Don't Divide at Line Ends

Names of people in Spanish are not supposed to be divided by a line break, if there is any way to possibly avoid it. This is different from English editing practices.

For further information, or to add items to this ongoing list of problems, recommendations and solutions, contact:

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